The West Fourth Street Story

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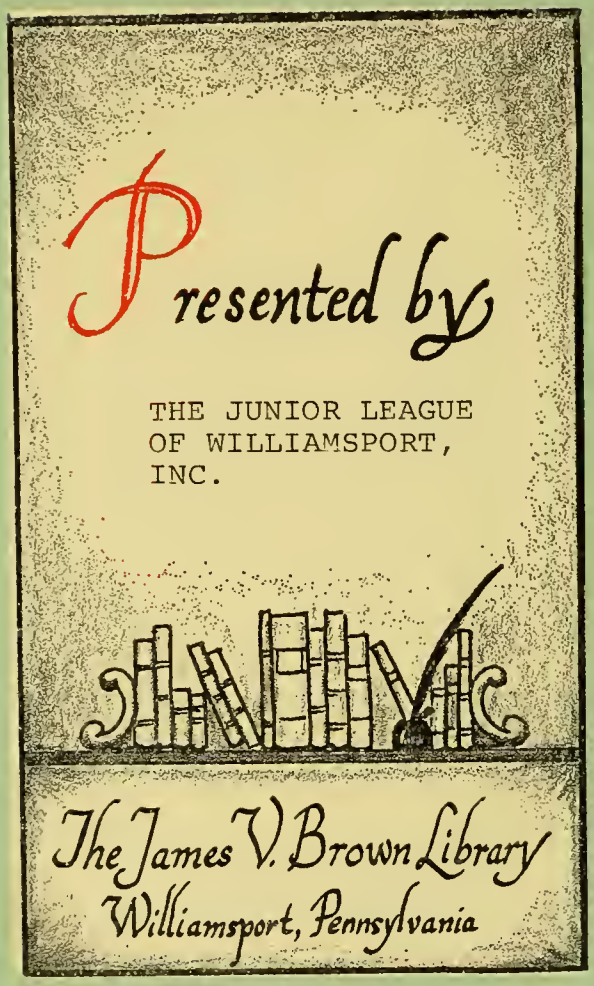

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The West Fourth Street Story

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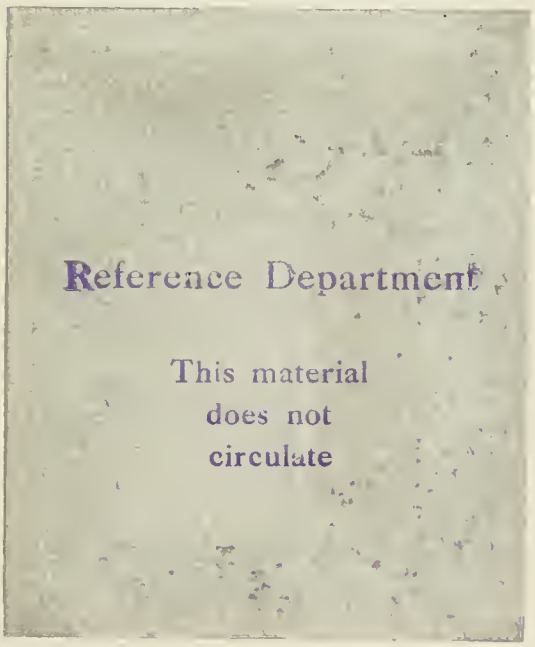
DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to the home owners of the "great thoroughfare" . . . past, present and future . . . whose lives carve the Heritage of West Fourth Street.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Acknowledgements

The Junior League of Williamsport, Incorporated is proud to publish this historic edition of The West Fourth Street Story. The interest of the general public and the enthusiastic community response to the League's lecture and slide series prompted the publication of this book. Those originally involved in the formulation of the slide lecture include: Mrs. Allan N. Young, Jr., Mrs. Charles M. Snyder, Mrs. Lewis M. Soars, Mrs. Marshall Welch, Mrs. Charles R. Stearns, Mrs. C. Welsh Hartman, and Mrs. Henry G. Hager, 3rd.

The property sites were selected on the basis of their relationship to the lumbering era, resident personalities, architectural significance and their location on "Millionaires' Row", West Fourth Street. The property owners are to be given generous thanks for opening their homes to be photographed and themselves to be interviewed. The cooperation and encouragement of so many residents within the community have made this edition a reality. Without the assistance of all interested persons the committee would not have been able to proceed with the publication. As progress is being made to preserve current historic structures, we have included several by-gone landmarks. These pages were made possible by the preservation of valuable photographs and memorabilia saved by many local historians.

There are others who are to be commended for their efforts.

Mrs. Thomas Marble for her current photographs and reproductions of historical photographs and documents.

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Everett Rubendall and the WRAK Radio Station for historic background material.

To all those of the Bureau of Codes in City Hall.

To all of those in the Register and Recorder Office of the Lycoming County Court House.

We hope that through our efforts you will enjoy this book and its historical contents.

The Editors
Barbara Griffith Ertel (Mrs. John C.)
Joann Carl Ertel (Mrs. James R.)
Nancy Baier Gilbert (Mrs. James F.)
Andree Pineau Fenstamaker (Mrs. Richard L.)
Sue Fenstamaker Young (Mrs. John M.)

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INTRODUCTION

The West Fourth Street Story begins in the superb forests of pine and hemlock which once clothed all the watershed of the West Branch Valley and the "Long Reach"[1] in the Susquehanna. Lumber created Williamsport's initial prosperity, and when that prosperity was at its peak during the last half of the 19th Century, more millionaires were said to be living on West Fourth Street than resided on any other street of similar length in the world.[2]

That West Fourth Street developed as "Millionaires' Row" was a direct result of the foresight, intelligence, and ambition of one man, Peter Herdic. Herdic settled in Williamsport in 1853 and began his purchase of land with five acres known as the Grove Lot for which he paid $5,000. Eventually, after securing the Woodward and Maynard farms, he was to own most of Fourth Street west of Hepburn Street. Much of the land was swampy and required draining and filling to make it suitable for building. In the area Herdic was to develop, he planned a hotel (which was to become the center of the social life of the day), a gas works to provide illumination, a row of offices adjacent to the railroad station, a complete business block, and locations for three places of worship.

An astute businessman, Herdic gave the railroad their right-of-way through Williamsport and land for the Walnut Street yards in return for a ninety-nine year agreement that the main station would be on a site of Herdic's choosing—next to his hotel. As the existing business district was a mile from the hotel, Herdic established a horse-drawn streetcar line to travel Fourth Street from Market Street at a fare of three cents.

Herdic wisely enlisted the exceptional talents of Eber Culver as architect for most of his projects.

Not only did Herdic create a residential area for the wealthy on Fourth Street, requiring that each home be set twenty to thirty feet from the property line thus insuring a fine perspective for viewing the mansions, but he also provided both lots and structures on surrounding streets to house the people and businesses necessary for the support of the life style found on Millionaires' Row.

It was Peter Herdic who was instrumental in gaining the city charter in 1866, and by fantastic manipulation had Newberry annexed without the residents of that area being aware of it until after the feat was accomplished. In the fall of 1869 he was elected the fourth mayor of Williamsport.

Although his fortunes rose and fell, as did many during lumbering's "gilded age", the effects of his planning for West Fourth Street are visible today. The lofty spire of Trinity Episcopal Church, the impressive Park Home, and a fine residential avenue remain as monuments to the genius of Peter Herdic.

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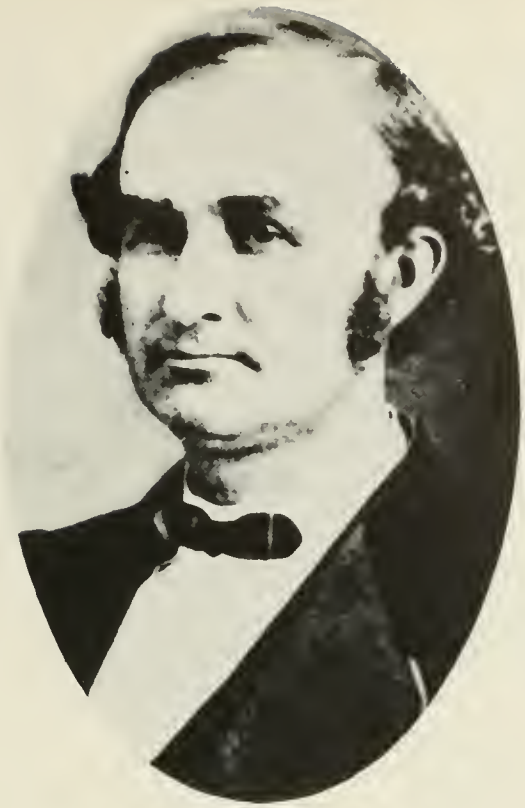
[1] The area from Linden to Halls Station.

[2] The explosive quality of Williamsport's early expansion can be seen in the arrival of six major railroad lines and in the tripling of population within the decade from 1860 to 1870.



Peter Herdic.

Williamsport, Pa., Sept 27 1875

Mr. C. Sherman Esq

MANUFACTURER OF
AND DEALER IN
ROUGH & DRESSED LUMBER
OF ALL KINDS,
including
Lath, Pickets, Shingles, &c.

BOUGHT OF **PETER HERDIC,**

Wholesale and Retail Lumber Dealer.

TERMS, [*Gazette and Bulletin Print.*]

OFFICE--Herdic's Block, near Herdic House.
YARD and MILL--Foot of Campbell Street.
YARD and MILL--Foot of Locust Street.

Four Hundred and Seven

When Peter Herdic settled in Williamsport with his wife, Amanda, there were very few homes available. He made contact with Eber Culver and together they designed and built the first of many elaborate mansions on West Fourth Street. Herdic's home was a fine example of Italian Villa architecture. Set well back from the street, it was a spacious home with great side yards. It was surrounded with intricate wrought iron fence and the yard had a fountain amid the lush shrubbery.

The four lower porches had "Egyptian Lotus" columns, the lower portion of the columns having grooves and leaf-like outward curls. The capitals were similar to the Corinthian style, but not as heavily adorned with acanthus leaves. The flat overhanging roof with carved bracketed eaves and the large square cupola are visible from the side and rear, but the ornament which once rose above the cupola has been removed. Many small terra cotta chimney pots can still be seen. Most of the original doors and windows retain their ornate moldings.

After Amanda Herdic died, Peter married Encie Elizabeth Maynard, daughter of John W. Maynard. It has been said that Encie was one of the most brilliant and cultured women in Williamsport and that she added both grace and beauty to Herdic's home and life. She filled their home with handsome furnishings and from his abundant means, provided guests with gaiety and lavish hospitality. One chair from the Herdic parlor has found its way to the Lycoming County Historical Society.

This residence has been home to Nathaniel Burrows Bubb, Charles D. Wolfe, the Tall Cedars (a social Club), and Mrs. Louise M. Plankenhorn. It is currently owned by Duane Stegman. Mutual of Omaha's office protrudes into the once spacious front yard.

Present day side entrance.

The First Baptist Church

The First Baptist Church of Williamsport officially came into existence at a meeting in a small, dingy room in the old Williamsport Court House on December 17, 1854. Among the sixteen present were Amanda Herdic and her father, Foster Taylor. After several unsuccessful attempts to find a suitable place of worship, the congregation agreed to accept a swampy building lot previously offered to them by Peter Herdic, who, although he was not a member of the church, appreciated his wife's religious activity. The lot was to be given only if they would agree to build thereon a "first-rate" house of worship. The deed included a clause stating that the lot would revert to the heirs of Herdic should it cease to be used for religious purposes.

The first structure erected on the northwest corner of Elmira and Fourth Streets was a small white wooden church with a lofty spire, designed and constructed by Eber Culver, who was an architect, builder, and active member of the church.[1]

As Williamsport expanded, Fourth Street changed from a dusty dirt road past scattered farm houses to a bustling cobbled thoroughfare past the beautiful homes of lumber barons. Growth came to First Baptist Church, too, and they began to expand by purchasing two lots to the north of the church.[2]

[1] The church had been constructed according to the traditional style of that period. The main entrance at the base of the tower faced Fourth Street and a curved pebble walk led in from the street. Here, on a Sunday morning, large black carriages pulled by two or four beautiful prancing horses would discharge their passengers. After entering the front hall, church members turned to either side to climb the winding, heavily-carpeted stairways which led to the hall above. From this hall they could look down upon a beautiful picture of ladies in bustled dresses and plumed hats, entering the church on the floor below.

From the second floor hall, three doors led into the church sanctuary. A center aisle, bordered on each side by white pews with dark mahogany railings and red cushions, led up to the pulpit. Stalls on either side faced the platform and were known as the "amen corners". Members of the congregation had their assigned pews for which they paid "rent" or "dues".[3]

[2] One faced Elmira Street with a three-story building on it, the home of the Williamsport Hospital. The Kelly property was on the corner of Elmira and Edwin Streets.

Culver drew plans for a chapel at the corner of Edwin and Elmira Streets, to be erected immediately; and a new church auditorium, to be erected at Fourth and Elmira Streets at a later time. The chapel was completed in 1894. The floods of 1889 and 1894 damaged the wooden floor joists and posts of the original church so severely that it had to be razed in 1898. In order to prevent any questions regarding the conditions in their deed from Herdic, the congregation immediately laid the foundations of their new church as specified by Culver. They constructed a platform over the foundations and conducted outdoor vesper services with band or orchestra on pleasant summer evenings. Disappointed by the estimated cost of building to Culver's plan, the church adopted a new set of plans prepared by Mr. Denison, of Denison and Hiron, for a less expensive ediface.

In 1914 the new First Baptist Church on Fourth Street was dedicated. It is beautifully constructed of native mountain stone in the Romanesque style. The Byzantine decoration of the interior features quartered oak, open truss work, wooden ceilings, wainscoting, a superb carving of symbolic eagles by William Dittmar, and windows of antique leaded glass by Young and Bonawitz.

In 1911, prior to the completion of the Church, memorial services were held for Eber Culver, who had created so much that is beautiful for his church and his city.

In 1954 the church was carefully renovated, providing a divided chancel, each change conforming perfectly to the decor of the church.

> *"Thus the church stands, on the corner of Fourth and Elmira Streets, today. Now, having served the past, it is prepared to serve the future."*[3]

[3] "One Hundred Years of Christian Service to the Community"—booklet published by the First Baptist Church, Williamsport, Pa.

Four Hundred and Five

When financial difficulties beset Herdic, the side yards of his home were sold as building lots. The corner to the east was purchased by Albert DuBois Hermance, who had founded Rowley and Hermance (later Hermance Machine Company) which manufactured woodworking machinery. In 1885, Eber Culver designed and built this red-roofed, three story castle-like stone home in Richardsonian-Romanesque style.

The outstanding feature of the Hermance House is the beautiful wooden hand carving by Giovanni Ferrari. The doors and staircase still approximate their original condition, although the building has been extensively altered to accommodate eleven apartments. The dining room alone was converted into two apartments.

Additional wood carving is the work of William Dittmar, who studied the work of Ferrari and carved the signs above the door identifying the apartments as belonging to the present owner, Al Ferrari.

This home is featured in the book "Homes and Heritage of the West Branch Valley."

Four Hundred and Eleven

The west side yard of the Herdic residence was purchased in 1878 by Lemuel M. Ulman, son of Moses Ulman, who had established M. Ulman Sons store in 1856. The majestic brownstone and brick home built for the Ulman family illustrates late Victorian influence, as it was designed by Eber Culver approximately thirty years after he did the Herdic residence.

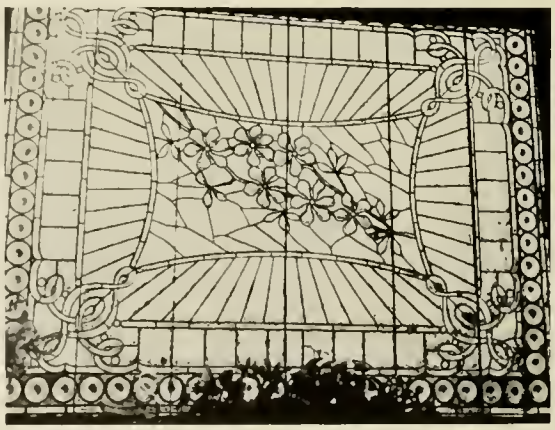
Immediately inside the entry, this mansion features beautiful double doors with magnificent beveled, leaded glass, opening into an oak-wainscoted hallway which once led to parlors, living and dining rooms, a library, and the kitchen.

When the home was purchased in 1936 by the present owner, Miss Sarah K. Snyder, she fortunately acquired with the home several unique pieces of furniture, including a Greener Concert Grand piano and a hand-carved oak dining room suite which was designed specifically for the house. The furniture features delicately carved "griffins"[1] showing the influence of mythology on late Victorian era furnishings.

The home contains many of the original gas light fixtures and a functional sentry system. The tower rooms on each floor provide a panoramic view of history passing on West Fourth Street. In addition to being the residence of the owner, this home contains commercial offices and three apartments.

[1]An animal, half lion, half eagle, which was sacred to the sun and supposedly guarded gold and hidden treasure.

One of the hand-carved oak "griffins" on the sideboard.



The colors and theme of this stained glass window are repeated in several other windows throughout the home.

Five Hundred and Twenty-Two

Like so many others, Hiram Rhoads came to Williamsport in the midst of the lumber boom. He quickly became one of the city's most successful businessmen. Rhoads labored to introduce the telephone to the area, and in 1879 he succeeded in establishing the second exchange in Pennsylvania (the first being in Erie). Rhoads had the first telephone installed in his residence on Third Street and within a year had organized the Central Pennsylvania Telephone and Supply Company, of which he was President. Although best remembered for his work with the telephone, he was also instrumental in founding and developing several of the electric enterprises.

In the late 1880's, Hiram Rhoads employed the genius of Eber Culver to design his residence. Through the years that have followed, this home has been structurally unaltered. Although it was made into apartments, the interior is still in excellent condition.

The front door and entry way display beautiful stained glass of a most unusual design. Handcarved mahogany wainscoting and a winding stairway dominate the large center hall. All the hardware in the main part of the house is gilded bronze. The original chandeliers were among the most magnificent in Williamsport. The flooring in the living room is solid pecan, which presents an interesting contrast to the dark, rich mahogany fireplace.

The exquisite pattern of this interior hardware is repeated throughout the home.

Mahogany bathtub and wainscoting.

The second floor had four bedrooms, each containing a marble washbowl and a large fireplace. The main bathroom still utilizes the original wooden bathtub which was one of the first in Williamsport.

The owners have shown foresight in preserving the beauty and charm of this fine example of Queen Anne architecture. Culver, in his autobiography, says that he felt his Queen Anne style designs were the most successful of his career, and this and the Rowley house would certainly support such an opinion.

Five Hundred and Twenty-Eight

A simple frame home with an expansive front porch was the home of Mr. and Mrs. John M. McMinn and their seven children. Shortly after the last child was born, the McMinn family moved into this newly built home at the northeast corner of Locust and Fourth Streets.

McMinn had come to Williamsport in 1853 and worked as a first assistant to Robert Faries, then the chief engineer for the construction of the Sunbury and Erie Railroad. McMinn served as city engineer and made the first lithograph map of Williamsport, which was published in 1857. In 1860, he and the Rev. Cyrus Jeffries published the first edition of the West Branch Bulletin, forerunner of the Gazette and Bulletin, now the Sun-Gazette. McMinn had business dealings with Peter Herdic and surveyed the land for Wildwood Cemetery.

When McMinn moved south, his home was purchased by Benjamin C. Bowman, one of the first men to float logs from Centre County via the Susquehanna River into Williamsport. Bowman was recognized as one of the most prominent lumber operators in the Susquehanna Valley. He was at one time president of the Susquehanna Boom Company, president of Lycoming Rubber Company, and vice-president of Lumberman's National Bank. He was affiliated with B. C. Bowman and Company and with Bowman and Foresman Lumber Company.

After the flood of 1889, the home was completely remodeled in the then avant-garde Colonial Revival style. The central third floor dormer is decorated with Ionic columns, scroll pediment, and a fan topped window. The second story fascia board is adorned with garlands and protected by the wide eaves. Here, and again on the first floor level, are the Ionic columns inviting attention to the doorway or the oval leaded glass window.

Henry S. Mosser, of J.K. Mosser and Company, local tanners, purchased the home in 1917. His family lived there until 1955, when a group of physicians bought the property to convert to offices. The Susquehanna Group's common waiting room was once the grand entry hall with an extra wide staircase, which since has been removed. This waiting room has all of the original paneling and molding and a lovely fireplace. The arched brick alcove for the old cooking range is now a work area for laboratory technicians. The front porch has been enclosed to provide more office space.

Five Hundred and Thirty-One

Like many of its neighbors, this brick and frame home was designed by Eber Culver. It was built about 1880, for the Col. Frederick E. Embick family and has always been known as "Embick Cottage." Col. Embick was with Company A, "The Woodward Guards", of the Eleventh Regiment during the Civil War.

In 1892, Embick was a director of the Demorest Manufacturing Company of Williamsport, which, during that year, manufactured an average of fifty sewing machines daily, opera chairs and "New York" racing bicycles.

In the early 1900's, the Embick family moved to New York City, and the home was purchased by Joseph B. Rhoads. Mrs. Rhoads' brother, an architect, and her mother, Mrs. Catherine Harris, also lived in the home. Mrs. Harris lived to be 100 years old in her own apartment on the third floor.

The beautiful entrance boasts panels of hand-carved flowers and leaves on the front door, and opaque, pink, lavender, and purple leaded stained glass windows. Inside, a massive dark oak stairway rises to the third floor. The main chandeliers and sidelights have been moved to a private residence.

One unique feature of this lovely home is the master's bathroom which has an exceptionally deep tub built-in with dark oak wainscoting identical to the rest of the room.

The present owners purchased the home from Mrs. Joseph Rhoads in 1951. Although now used as a commercial building, the original lines and the ornamentation have been retained inside and out.

Five Hundred and Thirty-Five

William V. Emery had Eber Culver design this handsome brick and cut stone home at 535 West Fourth Street in 1865. Emery was an associate of the Emery Lumber Company on West Third Street, which maintained a retail business for coal, ice, and lumber. Many retail lumber companies cut ice from the river in the winter and stored it in sawdust. On any warm day it was a special delight for children to chase the ice wagons, hoping to sneak a frozen sliver of the pure Susquehanna water. The Emery Lumber Company was subsequently purchased by the Lundy Lumber Company.

The Emery's youngest child, Eugene M., continued with the family business and lived in the family home, as did his son. Mrs. Eugene Emery, Jr., had the home changed into five apartments after the Depression. The apartments are so well designed around the beautiful front stairway and curving rear stairs that it is hard to believe it was ever a one-family home.

535 was purchased in 1966, by the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Michael J. D'Addio, who are maintaining it as an apartment house.

Six Hundred and Twenty

The Honorable Henry Clay McCormick, attorney, and his wife, Ida Hays, lived and entertained in this elegant home with its ballroom on the third floor. Stories of gala parties with politically and socially prominent people of Pennsylvania still linger around Williamsport.

McCormick was one of the seven children born to Seth T. and Ellen Miller McCormick, also of West Fourth Street. At twenty-five, he was elected solicitor of Williamsport, and his career continued with activity in both local and national politics. McCormick was involved in organizing the Cochran, Payne, and McCormick banking house, Edison Electric Illuminating Company, and in 1892, he was elected president of the Williamsport and North Branch Railroad Company.

Henry Clay McCormick, a local attorney and grandson of the McCormick's, fondly recalls the traditional family meals at this home on Thanksgiving and Christmas when the food came on endlessly. Being a child, he was always delighted to notice when someone would leave after the first course to run to Steinbacker's on the 500 block of West Third Street for the ice cream for dessert.

This lovely home was named the Ida Hays McCormick Welfare Center in the late 1930's, when it was donated for that purpose after the death of Mrs. McCormick. When the welfare center opened, it contained offices and conference rooms for the Red Cross, Crippled Children's Society, State Chest Clinic, Social Services Bureau, Confidential Exchange, Lycoming County Tuberculosis Society, Children's Aid Society, and the Junior League of Williamsport.

Although 620 West Fourth Street was demolished for the Lycoming County Crippled Children's Society Playground, the carriage house of the McCormick mansion still serves as the home of the Society.

Six Hundred and Thirty-Nine

The home and business of Auguste Laedlein were housed in this delightful brick building (probably designed by Culver, for it closely resembles its neighbors) at the corner of West Fourth and Walnut Streets.

Encouraged by his uncle to take advantage of the opportunities occasioned by the rapid growth of "Millionaires' Row", Auguste Laedlein and his father left France (where Auguste had mastered the finest in culinary art) and arrived in Williamsport ready to establish a catering shop. They chose property which would enable them to deliver easily to the well-to-do residents of Fourth Street.

Their building contained family living quarters on the second floor and a lovely iced cream parlor complete with marble-topped tables and ceiling fans on the main floor. The Laedleins enclosed their side yard with a high board fence and provided small tables and chairs where their customers could enjoy homemade iced cream and cake in a lovely outdoor garden setting.

Laedlein's business grew rapidly and soon he was catering not only to Fourth Street patrons but to weddings and parties throughout the area. Mayonnaise created "drop by drop" was one of his most famous specialties.

The building has changed hands, but has never undergone any exterior structural remodeling. With the exception of defacing paint and signs, the Auguste Laedlein shop stands very much as it stood when created by the Laedleins in 1886.

The Church of the Annunciation

Although he was an Episcopalian and his wife a Baptist, Peter Herdic donated the land at the corner of West Fourth and Walnut Streets to the Church of the Annunciation. For eleven years, English-speaking and German-speaking Catholics had worshipped together in a small frame structure, now the site of St. Boniface Church. The Parish of Annunciation originated in 1865 when the sixteen English-speaking families left St. Boniface to worship in rented quarters known as Doebler's Hall on West Third Street. Annunciation's first church building was a brick structure on West Edwin Street where the western half of St. Joseph's School now stands.

In May, 1886, the foundation of Annunciation was begun and work continued for three years with few interruptions until, stone by stone, the present handsome and imposing ediface was finished. Amos Wagner designed the $67,000 project.

The building is constructed of conglomerate rock and sandstone, quarried at Ralston, and it is pretty stone, well suited to its purpose. The exterior of this Romanesque structure is pleasing to the eye, with towers and groups of buttresses surmounted by fine pinnacles adding beauty to the architectural design. Although the original elevations show a steeple, it was never completed. On August 31, 1887, the scaffolding for the tower, at almost its present height, collapsed, killing four stone masons. The tower was capped and a cross affixed.

Built to accommodate one thousand worshippers, this is the largest area church without any center columns. No structural steel was used in the roof—the supports are wood frames. The interior is finished in richly designed oak. The gallery, wainscoting, doors and stairs are antique oak, and the pews are oak with curved backs. It is "one of the most comfortable houses of worship in this state" and a source of great pleasure to the parish.

The atmosphere of the church is bright and cheerful due to the free use of color. The walls are finished in a soft lavender blending with the gray colonnades. The area immediately behind and surrounding the main altar is finished in rich wine with gold fleur-de-lis designs. The ceiling is sky blue with sections of pink, and ornamented in gold leaf. Murals of the Ascension and the Assumption appear high above the altars of the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph. A mural of the Annunciation is within the dome sections over the main altar.

Forty-three windows, ranging from two large and richly marked frames on either side of the church body, to smaller single-pane frames near the magnificently carved marble altar, are the outstanding feature of the church. All of the windows are rich in design and pattern allowing sunlight to play in a kaleidoscopic beauty. They were furnished at a cost of $3,600 and are excellent examples of art in stained window work. There are also six windows in the vestibule, and six in the gallery plus a handsome Catherine wheel window. The sacristy holds ten small windows.

It can truly be said today, as in 1889, that ". . . the (new) church is a credit to the city of Williamsport and a worthy addition to the fine buildings which have made this city famous."[1]

[1]Sun-Gazette 3/25/1889.

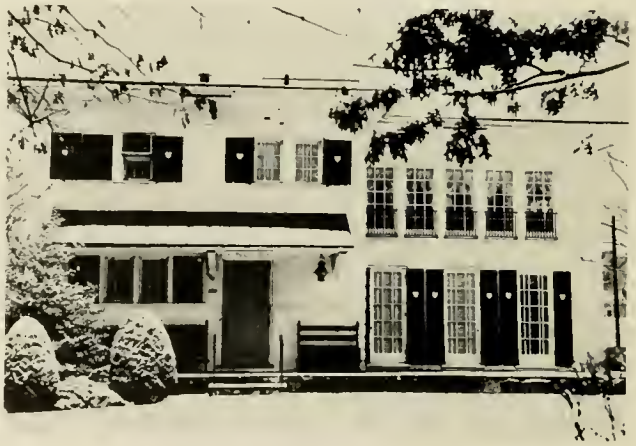
Six Hundred and Thirty-Four

The Smith-Ulman house, a three story brick Mansard showing Italian Villa influence, was possibly designed by Isaac Hobbs and built about 1870 for Henry B. Smith, a lumber dealer.

Owned and occupied by the Ulman family for some years, this handsome structure was then purchased to replace the original rectory at the corner of Edwin and Walnut Streets.

It has been remodeled several times, but the parlor, sitting room, and dining room remain essentially unchanged. The house displays beautiful crystal and converted gas chandeliers taken from the Rowley house across the street, and the plaster ceiling pieces are among the loveliest on Fourth Street.

The home is owned by The Most Reverend J. Carroll McCormick, D.D., The Bishop of Scranton, in trust for the Parish, and serves as a private residence for the priests of Annunciation Parish.



This two-story building grew from its humble beginning as an Italianate carriage house for the Smith-Ulman mansion at 634 West Fourth Street to a gracious private clubhouse for women. Although completely renovated, the floor plan remains essentially the same. Two original doorways face the south. The ventilator, a familiar detail of this landmark, was used to allow the escape of heat from the second floor hayloft. Varied civic, cultural, and social events have occurred in the Woman's Club over the last fifty years. This former stable provides an attractive setting for meetings, wedding receptions, lectures, luncheons, and teas.

Seven Hundred and Seven

> *"The new residence of E. A. Rowley now in the course of erection at the corner of West Fourth and Walnut Streets will be an elegant one when completed. It will have electric light, electric bells, speaking tubes, a dumbwaiter and all the other appliances of a first class residence."*[1]

Probably the most magnificent remaining example of the craftsmanship which exemplified "Millionaires' Row" is the Rowley House. Eber Culver designed this superb Queen Anne three-story brick mansion and it is recognized as one of the most outstanding examples of its kind of Victorian architecture in the Commonwealth.

Lumber is used extensively in both the exterior and interior of the house and evidences of the architect's attention to detail are seen as much in the exterior wood trim and friezes as in the interior carved fireplaces and mirrored mantels. From the elaborately carved throne-like chairs in the entrance hall through the dining room with its built-in buffet, to the unusually carved staircase, only the choicest woods were used as befitting a residence in the lumber capital of the world.

> *"The plastering, a great piece of work and probably the finest ever executed in the city"*[2]

is in beautiful condition. Completely intact gasoliers, with cut glass globes inside, and numerous stained glass windows testify to the home's elegant past.

Marble and tile fireplaces adorn many rooms and all are crowned by ornate mantel pieces with bevelled mirrors.

Newel post and gasolier detail.

Entrance hall chair.

Dining room buffet encases a stained glass window.

The entrance hall.

From the Rowley family, ownership passed to J. K. Rishel, a furniture manufacturer of Hughesville and Williamsport. The Rishels lived in the house until the 1930's.

The home is now a residence for the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Williamsport is indeed fortunate that the owners of Rowley House, past and present, have cared so lovingly for this historic treasure.

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[1]Sun-Gazette 2/9/1888.
[2]ibid.

Seven Hundred and Eleven

In the late 1880's, Elias Deemer commissioned his friend, Eber Culver, to design a residence on West Fourth Street. The Queen Anne exterior of this home has not been changed. Large porches remain to keep the first-floor rooms shaded from the sun. The characteristic asymmetrical massing of shapes and textures gives this home a picturesque appearance similar to that of the Rowley house.

Gables, dormers, and varied window treatments are visible above the delicate spindlework of the porches. The carriage house at the rear of the property still holds the rings where horses were once tied.

The interior of this seventeen-room brick structure clearly reflects the lumbering age. The richness of cherry abounds in the winding staircase and the handsome wainscoting and paneling of the center hall.

$100 Reward

A Reward of *ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS* will be paid for information that will lead to the arrest and conviction of any person or persons who shall fraudulently deface or obliterate any marks upon any Saw Logs, or who shall fraudulently saw, split or consume, destroy or injure, or who shall fraudulently sell or purchase, or convert to his or their use any Saw Logs in the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.

Address

LOST LOG COMMITTEE,

Lumbermens Exchange Williamsport Pa

Cast iron log brander which bears the initials of Elias Deemer. The number identifies a specific timber tract.

The Herdic Block

The Herdic Block, designed by Eber Culver and built by Peter Herdic in 1870, was to be the business center of the city. Herdic had hopes that it would be used partly as an opera house and as rented locations for the government post office, a public market, and the United States Court Rooms for the Western District of Pennsylvania.

Among the first tenants of the Herdic Block in 1870 were Lumberman's National Bank, Lycoming Gas and Water Company, and Williamsport Manufacturing Company, all of which Herdic served as president. Other companies included Williamsport Iron and Lumber, S. N. Williams Lumber, West Branch Lumber, Susquehanna Boom, Laurel Run Improvement, Bennetts Branch Improvement, and E. H. Burlingame, Civil Engineer and Land Agent.

In 1878, when Peter Herdic went into voluntary bankruptcy, the building was not quite completed. William Weightman took over all of Herdic's holdings and completed the construction of Weightman Block.[1]

The entire building at the corner of Campbell and Fourth Streets is constructed of large timber and bricks. It was built without the aid of steel beams or elevators. The floors are concrete, the plaster walls are sixteen inches thick, and the doors and woodwork solidly carved wood. The outside of the building is of interest in that each of the three floors has a different window lintel. The street front entrances have been changed over the years to suit the many different tenants, but the upper floors remain basically the same.

The eighteen-foot ceilings have lent themselves to the conversion of one room into a bi-level apartment with a loft effect bedroom area. Some of the apartment doors are decorated with the original brass elephant head and trunk door knockers, and some have the original folding pine blinds and shutters. The penthouse was never completed and the lumber which was to be used remains on the fifth floor level. The safes used by the banks are large walk-in, lead-lined rooms reminiscent of the more prosperous era past. Today, the Weightman Block has nine business and forty-nine residential tenants.

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[1] William Weightman, "The Quinine King", was a partner in the Philadelphia firm of Powers and Weightman, which was the first to manufacture sulphate of quinine.

Herdic House

The focal point of the Fourth Street saga must be Herdic House.

This four-story, brick, Victorian hotel was designed in 1864 by Eber Culver and opened to the public in 1865.[1] The story has been told that Herdic asked Culver to travel about the country, look at the better hotels, then come back and design one for Williamsport and submit an estimate for it.

[1] A spectacular though disastrous event took place on the afternoon Herdic House was to open. The gas works Herdic had built to provide illumination burned to the ground. An undaunted Peter Herdic scurried downtown and bought all the candles and coal oil lamps he could locate. The elaborate celebration went on as scheduled. It is a coincidence that on the night this hotel became the Park Home the lights failed as they did on the opening night of Herdic House just seventy-five years before.

As Culver turned to leave the room, Herdic said that on second thought perhaps he should not submit an estimate for if he did perhaps he (Herdic) would not build it. The total cost is said to have been $225,000. The finished hotel, a pretentious structure, located in a lovely park shaded by native oak trees, was capable of housing seven hundred guests and was soon considered one of the finest hotels on the Eastern seaboard. A deer park, fronting the hotel, was fenced and had a decorative fountain and never fewer than three or four deer.

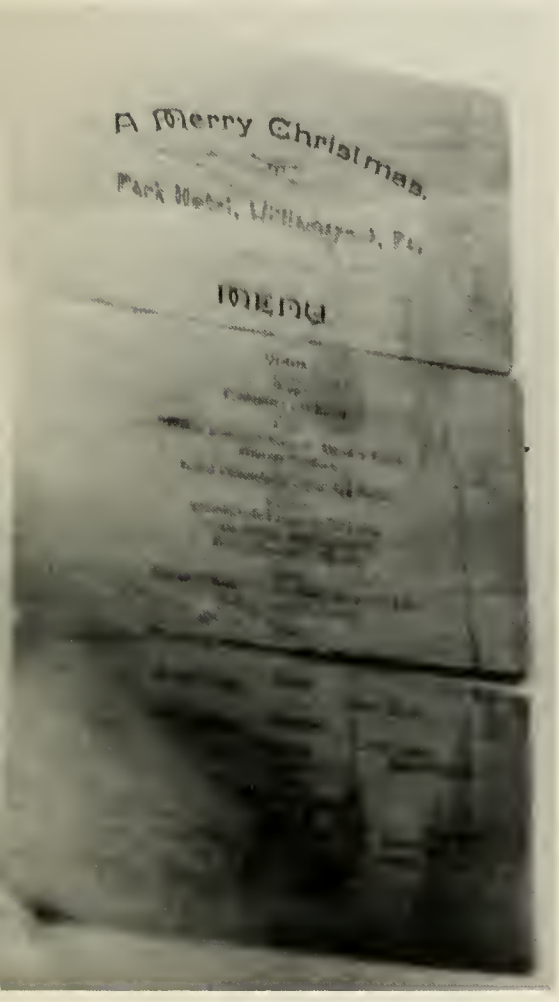
North Portico which once connected the Herdic House with the Philadelphia and Erie Railroad Station.

Before the advent of the dining car, all train schedules were contrived so a station restaurant was available at mealtimes, and passengers were greeted at Herdic House by a chef standing on the porch calling out an invitation to dinner. Planked shad, as prepared in local lumber camps, was a specialty of the house. The extensive menu was reproduced on thin sheets of wood. The railroad station at its back door, the street car line at its front door; Herdic House was one of the liveliest places in Williamsport.

After passing from the ownership of Peter Herdic, the hotel changed hands several times. It was rented from the Weightman estate by Col. Charles Duffy, who opened it in 1889 as the Park Hotel. In 1930, it was purchased by William Budd Stuart who removed the two top stories to conform with fire regulations before opening it in 1940 as the Park Home. Stuart enhanced the elegant atmosphere of the home with his magnificent collection of fine paintings.

Since its conception, Herdic House has been an active and exciting place, featuring concerts on the front lawn (some by Williamsport's famous Repaz Band), dances in the first floor ballroom, afternoon "Tea Dances", and sumptuous holiday parties.

Today, much of the same feeling prevails in the home. The grandeur is still in evidence in the elaborate crystal chandeliers, oriental rugs, tapestries, oil paintings, and stately rooms. The basic design is still that of a hotel with the inhabitants treated as guests. Picnics on the lawn, parties, meals served by waitresses, modern conveniences, and the spirit of freedom and pride which permeates the care of this home combine to create happy and contented residents.



Kitchen stove.

Eight Hundred and Fifteen

Mahlon L. Fisher, architect and builder of Greek Revival houses, came to Williamsport from Flemington, New Jersey in 1855. He became affiliated with members of the powerful lumbering families[1] and eventually became a wealthy lumber dealer himself. Of Fisher, John Meginness, Lycoming County historian, said:

> *"Mahlon L. Fisher was the artificer of his own life and was one of the few men who became rich and yet maintained a reputation spotless and unsullied. Truth, honor, and fidelity was the platform on which he stood firm and unmovable. His generosity was without stint."*

In 1866, Eber Culver, who had recently finished Herdic House, designed a magnificent stone villa with towers fore and aft, to house Fisher, his wife, and seven children. The grounds were ornamented by a fountain, urns, and large statues of "Summer" and "Winter". Gardens enhanced both side and rear. It was a pretentious mansion, even in the days when it was fashionable to try to "out do" neighbors, and the home became known as the "Million Dollar Mansion".

The cultural atmosphere of the rapidly growing city played a vital role in the lives of the Fisher family. Surrounded by luxury in his youth, John Stires Fisher, eldest son of Mahlon, expanded his wealth by managing extensive lumber interests in central Pennsylvania and Canada. Both he and his wife were artistically and musically inclined and were personal friends of artists Severin Roesen and George Benjamin Luks. Their third son, Mahlon Leonard, became vitally interested in the arts. He was a noted poet in Williamsport's cultural circles and his work is still recognized.

The home fell into disrepair, many of the furnishings were disposed of at auction, and the "Million Dollar Mansion" was razed to provide a site for the construction of the Y.W.C.A.

[1] John G. Reading, Peter Herdic.

Eight Hundred and Twenty-Nine

The first dwelling at 829 was occupied by Benjamin Taylor, lumberman. It was completely destroyed by fire, and the home presently seen at 829 was built by Henry Parsons, lawyer, and at one time Mayor of Williamsport.

A magnificent cherry door with gleaming brass trim graces the entrance to this Queen Anne style home. The door was once framed with stained glass, but it has been replaced with leaded glass. The original stained glass remains in the windows of the upper floors. Cherry wood is repeated in the handsomely carved mantels.

The home contained a square dove-tailed pine bathtub that was copper lined. It has been removed, but remains in the possession of the present owner.

A unique feature of this residence is a network of tin tubing that connected several of the twenty-seven rooms to an old fashioned "Intercom". These speaking tubes made it a little easier to communicate within such a large mansion.

Solid cherry front door.

Eight Hundred and Thirty-Five

The mansion built in 1889 by William Emery, when he married Mary White Gamble, is a stone structure designed by Eber Culver in Richardsonian-Romanesque style. It was erected on the east side yard of the John White estate.

The thirty-room home, including a servants' wing on the south side, butler's quarters on the fourth floor, and a charming carriage house at the rear, was purchased in 1906 by Seth T. Foresman. The house was at its height of Victorian luxury. It contained a music room where the children entertained themselves on a player piano. The living room had lace curtains and draperies covering the inside folding oak blinds, and the floors were covered with oriental rugs.

The house was owned by the Kaye family, then the Ackerman family. It was used as an apartment house, and fell into disrepair when used by the Army as a reserve center in the 1940's. Evidently, inside target practice was held because nearly one thousand pounds of plaster had fallen on the oak floors.

Dr. Francis Costello purchased the property in 1956 and completed extensive restoration and renovation.

The entrance hall in its Victorian splendor.

With the removal of the dining room table and Victorian knick-knacks, this room serves as the office of William E. Nichols.

The building contains a treasure of architectural features exemplifying "Millionaires' Row." Massive wooden doors open to an entrance hall dominated by a magnificent quartered oak stairway, adorned by a large pagoda-style fireplace, and lit by two chandeliers, suspended by a single chain from the thirty-five foot ceiling. Woodwork in natural cherry and oak, bas-relief, moldings twelve inches deep, wainscoting, beautifully carved fireplaces, and many glorious stained glass windows have been refurbished. A four-knot pattern or insignia is repeated in brass hardward throughout the house.

The aesthetic appeal of this house is overwhelming and each room has its own individuality and charm. Oversized clear glass windows give a many faceted view of the seasonal panorama of Way's Garden. Dr. Costello and the present owner, the law firm of McCormick, Lynn, Nichols, Reeder, and Sarno, are to be commended. Because of their interest in historic preservation, one of the city's finest homes still shines brightly on a street where the gem is the rule, rather than the exception.

Trinity Episcopal Church

The epitome of appropriate design is to be seen in the lovely English Gothic spire designed by Eber Culver to crown Trinity Episcopal Church. This Gothic building reflects a lightness, delicacy, and simple beauty most fitting for a house of worship.

> *"The pointed arch, the acute pitch of the roof, the soaring pinnacles–all direct attention upward."*[1]

The movement to establish this church began at a meeting at Herdic House in December, 1865. With the population of Williamsport on the increase, an Episcopal Church west of Hepburn Street was deemed necessary. In 1871, the cornerstone was laid for a permanent building on a lot donated by Peter Herdic at the corner of West Fourth Street and Trinity Place.

Fred G. Thorn prepared the original plans, but moved to Philadelphia, leaving Eber Culver as the supervising architect. At Herdic's suggestion, architect Culver created the beautiful lofty spire and executed many of the elaborate and costly details.

The mountain stone used in constructing the church was quarried from the sides of Bald Eagle Mountain at Stone Switch, near Muncy. It was hammer-dressed, laid in irregular courses, and its joints were pointed with black mortar. The brownstone used for window jambs, door jambs, and buttress caps came from Hummelstown.

[1] "History of Lycoming County, 1876" published by D. J. Stewart.

As the completion date approached, Herdic gave the church an organ and a tower clock,[2] while Judge John Maynard (Herdic's father-in-law) and his wife presented the church with a nine-bell chime.

The Maynard chime was used not only for the call to worship, but also in sounding the famous Cambridge quarter-hour chimes from the tower clock. The notes are arranged from an air by Handel and were first used in Cambridge, England. Trinity had the honor of introducing these famous chimes to the United States.

That the church would be out of debt and ready for consecration when completed could hardly be anticipated until Herdic quietly announced his intention to present the finished building to the church corporation. Although the original estimate had been for $25,000, Peter Herdic spent nearly $80,000 for the completed project. On the day of consecration, February 22, 1876, Judge Maynard read and presented to the parish a deed from Herdic, not only for the lot, but for the building as well. Included in the deed was a stipulation that the pews were to remain forever free.

In 1884, Judge Maynard gave the church an adjoining lot, and a rectory was built. Thirty years later, in 1914, Amanda Howard gave Trinity the money to build a parish house which was used for church activities as well as for community recreation.

The hallowed walls of Trinity Episcopal Church created a cohesive force in this storied neighborhood.

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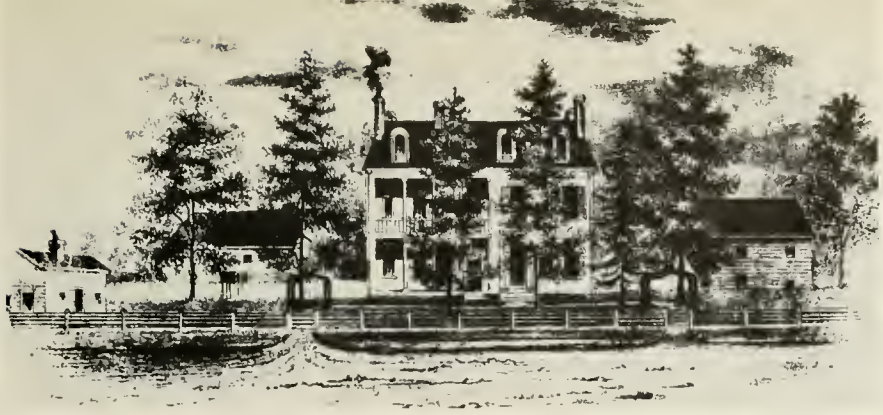
[2] The clock which was "Warranted not to vary over two seconds a week" had to be wound by hand each week until it was electrified in 1941. The original key remained in the lock until 1954 when it was stolen by vandals.



Eight Hundred and Fifty-Eight

The original building at 858 West Fourth Street was a three-bay Federal style brick farm home situated on a dusty lane and looking out on fertile fields and a lovely clump of woodland. The land had been purchased from James Hepburn and the farm home was built about 1840.

Time wrought many changes in the home and its surroundings. The Maynard family remodeled the house several times. The pillared veranda and balcony were replaced by a recessed porch, and the roofing lath of green split oak was replaced by slate. The fields gradually gave way to dwellings and the dusty lane became a bustling thoroughfare.

Judge J. W. Maynard erected two wings with cupolas on either side of the house. A Gothic tower with crenellations was added.

J. Roman Way bought the house in 1901, raised it three to four feet higher than it had been originally, probably to correspond well with its neighbors, remodeled the interior, and removed both the wings and much of the exterior Gothic trim. By 1922, the house had become an exceedingly attractive grey brick dwelling of spacious proportions with a hospitable atmosphere.

In 1939, it became the property of the Lycoming County Historical Society and opened as a museum in 1941. It housed the artifacts and exhibits of the society until December 22, 1960, when a disastrous fire burned a great hole through the center of the gracious old building. The excessive smoke and water damage was so severe that rehabilitation costs made the use of the shell impractical.

A new museum, contemporary and extremely functional as an exhibit center was designed by Frank A. Wagner. It was completed and opened to the public on November 22, 1968.

Corner of Fourth and Maynard Streets

This large Victorian structure once stood proudly in the center of what is now Way's Garden. It was planned and constructed by Robert Faries in the mid-eighteen hundreds. The dwelling was stuccoed brick, marked to resemble stone. The home was situated on an elevated mound to the rear of this spacious property.

After Faries death, the house, or castle, so called because of its large towers, became the property of John White, a lumberman. The Whites occupied the castle for more than forty years, until their deaths in the early 1900's.

Just as J. Roman Way was completing the extensive remodeling of his home diagonally across West Fourth Street, the first prospective buyer for the White castle announced her intention to use the mansion as a rooming house. Mr. Way bought the old home and had it dismantled brick by brick. According to a newspaper account in 1913:

> *". . . so solidly was the old building put up that it requires several blows to loosen each brick."*

The land soon assumed a pleasing aspect and later in 1913, J. Roman Way fulfilled his garden dream and presented "Way's Garden" to the City of Williamsport.

Nine Hundred and One

The brick home at the corner of West Fourth and Maynard Streets was designed and built by Amos Wagner in 1890 for Henry Johnson, a state legislator from Muncy, his wife, and six daughters. At its building, the house afforded a fine view of the Maynard home as well as Faries Castle.

The Johnsons were so well pleased with the builder and their home that for a wedding gift to one of the Johnson daughters they built a mirror image house adjacent to their home but at a right angle facing Maynard Street. The houses differ primarily in the splendid finishing touches chosen to display the distinctive personalities of their owners.

The second floor coal-burning fireplace features a curved drawer for the removal of ashes.

Utility made beautiful, a by-word of the day, exemplified in the hand-tooled red brass container for the wall mounted fire escape ladder from the third floor.

The impressive entrance to the Johnson home features mosaic tile flooring, lovely stained and leaded glass, ornate hardware, and beautifully detailed moldings and wainscoting. The entire house was finished with meticulous attention to use of the finest in materials and craftsmanship.

Changing hands a relatively few times, this home fortunately escaped any objectionable form of remodeling.

The present owners, Dr. and Mrs. George A. Durrwachter, enjoy a lovely side view of Way's Garden. The house at 901 West Fourth Street seems to have come full cycle; for in addition to housing the offices of Dr. Durrwachter, it is again providing an exquisite setting for gracious family living. All the beauty inherent in the original dwelling has been protected, restored, and skillfully adapted to a 20th Century life style.

Nine Hundred and Four

In 1868, land for the home at 904 West Fourth Street was deeded from Peter Herdic to Howard C. Taylor, who built his home in 1873. The house was sold to Daniel Stiltz and in 1891 was purchased by Garrett D. Tinsman.

The Tinsman name was very well known in the lumbering business. Garrett D.'s father, Garrett, was a pioneer in the business, as was his uncle, Peter, who began the first steam sawmill in the area in 1852. The owner of the home at 904 West Fourth Street operated a sawmill in the Maynard Street area, worked with the Cochran Coal Company, and served as president of the Williamsport Steam Company.

The home of Tinsman, his wife, Mary Ryan Hepburn, and their three children was a stucco structure, making it appear simpler and less complex than its neighbors. The main floor consisted of three large parlors or sitting rooms, a dining room on the east side, with a pantry and kitchen to the rear. The house has a curved stairway from the central entry hall. It once featured a three-foot semi-nude statue of a woman wearing a Roman toga standing in the niche part way up the staircase. The niche was said to be functional in that it allowed a casket to be manipulated down the curved stairway.

At the rear of the house stands an elegantly simple carriage house, which the Stiltz's used as a studio for the making of charcoal enlargements of photographs.

Fortunately, the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Ohmneiss, have started to restore this house after a heavily damaging fire in 1973. They are making an effort to retain as much of the stucco and Victorian ornamentation as possible while designing functional apartments inside.

Nine Hundred and Twelve

Harry Chaapel's Florist Shop and Greenhouses stood on the location of 906-912 West Fourth Street from the mid 1870's until 1898 and covered an extensive amount of the property between Third Avenue and Nichols Place. The original shop was moved around the corner to its present location at 324 Park Street where, for some time it was the Crouse Gymnasium and most recently the Hann-Litho Print Company. The original facade and turret remain and are well-preserved.

The Dutch Colonial gambrel-roofed home now at 912 West Fourth Street was built in 1905 for Henry Melick Foresman, general manager of the lumber concern of Williams and Foresman, at a cost of $47,500. The home is a copy of another lumberman's mansion built in Emporium, Pennsylvania, and it was rushed to completion for the marriage of Foresman's daughter, Martha Allen to John H. McCormick.

The outside brick work is Flemish bond. The columns are of the Roman Revival Period with Ionic capitals. The four main columns are seventy-four inches around at the base and eighteen feet high. The seventeen small columns are situated on the porch railing. Each one of the columns is hollow, having been put together of individually cut and shaped pieces, like barrel staves.

When this home was built the carriage house to the rear of the property accommodated horses on the ground level with an apartment for the horseman and chauffeur on the second story. Foresman soon had it remodeled for the latest invention—the automobile.

From all outward appearances, and the many chimneys on the roof, it would be thought that the home had many fireplaces, but actually there is only one—in the old main parlor or living room. The effect given by the clear glass of the double front doors backed by the fine leaded and etched glass of the vestibule doors is repeated on the first-floor landing in the upper sash windows, and then again on the third floor landing. The first floor entry is fifteen feet wide with three massive mahogany sliding doors which were made by the Crooks Door Company at a cost of $200 each. An open stairway leads to the third floor where originally there was a hardwood floored ballroom across the entire front of the structure. The ballroom was later converted to an apartment, but the flooring is visible as a reminder of past grandeur.

Ownership of the home was willed in 1944 to Rebecca Foresman who was married to B. Cameron Keefer, Jr. They in turn sold it to Mr. and Mrs. J. Ernest Hart, who used it as their private residence and as a tourist home.

In August, 1957, Dr. and Mrs. J. Carl Baier purchased the former millionaire mansion for the sum of $28,750, a fraction of the total cost of building the home fifty-two years earlier. For fifteen years it was used as a doctor's office on the first floor and a private residence on the second floor. Another doctor, the Visiting Nurses Association, and currently the American Cancer Society have occupied the western side of the first floor. Presently it is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Ralph S. Clinger, Jr. Clinger is an insurance adjustor, and his office is now located there.

Through all of the years and different tenants only one change of major significance has taken place downstairs and that was the construction of a partition in the original dining room to make a long and narrow room for ophthalmology examinations by Dr. Baier. It could be torn out today without interfering with the paneled molded ceiling, thus preserving the beauty of this once gracious and spacious home.

Nine Hundred and Fifteen

Just beyond Maynard Street, on the south side of West Fourth Street stands the home which was presented to Lucy J. R. Eutermarks as a wedding gift from her parents, Samuel and Emma Otto Filbert. The land was purchased and the title transferred to her from Peter Herdic. The home is said to have been designed by Eber Culver and is a two-story brick Italian Villa mansion built in the early 1870's. A cupola, which was removed in 1920 undoubtedly gave the families a great view of the surrounding area. Originally the wooden front porch extended across the entire facade, but it was removed around 1950 leaving the front stoop and the Italian cornices and bracketed eaves.

In 1901, Mr. and Mrs. Elwood S. Harrar rented the home and they eventually purchased it from John Eutermarks in 1907. The Harrar family objected to the unpopular superstitious number thirteen, so they had it changed to fifteen and the address has remained 915 West Fourth Street.

This eleven-room grand Victorian home has thirteen foot ceilings, some with ornamental plaster center pieces. The drawing room has a white marble fireplace and mantel. All of the windows were originally fitted with inside folding pine blinds. At the foot of the staircase and bannister there was a newel post topped by a gasolier.

This particular home is one of the fine examples of mid-19th Century design that has been well cared for and preserved both interiorly and externally by its owners.

Nine Hundred and Twenty-One

The Lyon home was built on land purchased from their friend and neighbor, John T. Fredericks, of 925 West Fourth Street. It was a spacious home sturdily constructed of cut stone and interestingly shaped hand-hewn shingles.

Following the death of her husband, Mrs. Lyon traveled in Europe where she was so impressed by French design that she brought a French architect to Williamsport to plan the remodeling of her home. The interior was enhanced by the addition of arched double French doors, separating the study and dining room, reproduced as exact replicas of doors seen and admired by Mrs. Lyon in a French castle. French provincial paneling in shaded tones of cream and brown was installed on all three floors of the home. Removal of the front porch was the only exterior change made.

Later, 921 West Fourth Street became the home of Miss Henrietta Baldy Lyon, early champion of woman's suffrage in Williamsport. Miss Lyon had an excellent education and the courage and tenacity to join the battle for ratification of the 19th amendment.

In 1937, the house became the property of Dr. and Mrs. Hugh S. Fredericks, who lived there until 1950 when it was purchased by Mrs. Thomas Redmond, Sr.

Mr. and Mrs. Howard C. Masters, the present owners who make their home in the first-floor apartment, have covered the deteriorating wooden shingles with siding. Painstaking care has been given to matching the moldings used in the original creation of French Provincial paneling.

The adaptation of this single home to an apartment building was so skillfully accomplished that the house retains all of its original beauty.

Nine Hundred Forty-Two–Nine Hundred Forty-Four

Around 1875, Peter Herdic and Eber Culver embarked on a real estate experiment building "double" houses. Their goals were to bring more residents to the western end of the city and to provide work for many lumbermen who were unemployed due to the decline in the lumber business. One result of this experiment was 942-944 West Fourth Street, an unsymmetrical double house with a Mansard roof.

A close look reveals that even the gingerbread trim on one side is different from the other. Each side is equivalent to a large single-family home, complete with servants' quarters. The first floor layout was so well planned that the maid could answer the front door from a hall without disturbing any family entertaining that might be going on in the parlor.

Since each side of the house was designed to be owned by different families, it has perhaps had more owners than any other house on West Fourth Street.

Today, Mrs. Margaret A. Newcomer owns and lives in 942, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Harris, Jr. own and maintain their photographic studio in 944 West Fourth Street.

Gingerbread on the West.

Gingerbread on the East.

Nine Hundred Forty-Nine–Nine Hundred Fifty-One

One of the largest of the West Fourth Street homes was built sometime between 1865 and 1870 by George W. Lentz, lumber manufacturer and banker, in conjunction with Peter Herdic. The earliest recorded occupant of the house (then numbered 295) was Robert McCormick Foresman. The brick mansion with Mansard style roof was a combination of Italian Villa and French Second Empire design.

In the early 1880's, a fire destroyed the original shallow Mansard roof and Foresman added a third floor, a very ornate Queen Anne roof, a portico and various other embellishments. After the remodeling the house contained more than fifty rooms! These changes were typical of the times for the home owners often changed the style of their home to meet the fashion of the day. "One-up-manship" flourished on West Fourth Street with the newly rich admiring anything cultural and seeking to possess and display proof of their improved financial and social status.

The home at 951 West Fourth Street was not as showy as some, but it did boast evidences of wealth. Unusual brass door knobs; stained glass windows featuring the heads of Mozart, John Milton, and Tasso (the Italian poet, apparently in keeping with the original Italian design of the home); ceramic fireplace tiles depicting scenes from the Tales of King Arthur; all attest to the impression of culture desired by the owner. All the interior walls of the original house were frescoed with trompe l'oeil moldings, cornices, and other plaster ornaments.

The elaborate hand carving which frames the dining room fireplace, the beautiful mahogany stair railing, and an elegant cherry corner cupboard are fine examples of the excellent wood working craftsmanship of the period.

The marbleized slate fireplace in the living room is topped by a tremendous mirror (once gold-leafed) which was strategically placed to catch the light of a fabulous Victorian chandelier.[1]

As the Foresman children grew up and moved away, the home was converted into nine apartments and has been known as the Cleveden since 1917. In 1938, John B. and Alice Gibson Voelkler purchased the home. At present, the property is part of the estate of Mrs. Voelkler.

[1] The chandelier has been installed in the Victorian Room of the Lycoming County Historical Society Museum.

Blue and white tiles on black frame a second floor fireplace. The corner tiles represent fire and ice.

The gasolier from the newel post can be seen in the Victorian Room of the Lycoming County Historical Society Museum.

Ten Hundred and Five

This spacious house at 1005 West Fourth Street with its grand verandas, arched windows, and handsome woodwork exemplifies the elegant living of the Victorian era when men did not apologize for their wealth, but displayed it boldly. Both the main house and the extremely large carriage house are basically a simplified form of the English High Victorian Gothic style; but English Victorian Gothic, English Tudor chimneys, Italian arched windows, a balcony out of a gable, and a turret with a spire-like wrought iron ornament combine to present an impressive individuality of design.

Probably built in the mid 1860's, the house, as well as the land, was owned by Peter Herdic, H. E. Taylor, and John G. Reading until purchased by John E. Goodrich in 1869. Goodrich was in the wholesale grocery business, but went into lumbering as the firm of Goodrich and Taber which maintained a saw, shingle, and jack mill until 1878. Apparently Goodrich was hit by the panic of 1878 because the house was sold at sheriff's sale that year.

It was the same panic that brought the next owners of the house at 301 West Fourth Street (now 1005) to Williamsport. Peter Herdic's holdings had been acquired by William Weightman who sent his daughter, Anne, and her husband, R. J. C. Walker, to Williamsport to supervise his new ventures. In the 1880's, West Fourth Street was the place to live and the Walker house was one of the finest on "Millionaires' Row".

Walker, a graduate of Harvard University, was a lawyer. He was elected a representative to Congress from the 16th District in 1880. He became president of the Lumberman's National Bank, but he and his wife returned to Philadelphia when he was admitted to his father-in-law's firm in 1893.

Anne Weightman Walker inherited all of her father's estate in 1904. After the death of her husband, she married Frederick Courtland Penfield who was the last ambassador to the court of Austria before World War I. Mrs. Walker Penfield, who was referred to as "the Woman Midas" in her obituary, became known as the wealthiest woman in the world after the death of Hettie Green. She was said to have returned to Williamsport on many occasions to entertain at the Park Hotel, which she then owned. On several occasions she chartered a private railroad car to transport her guests to Niagara Falls for Weekend galas.

J. Henry Cochran purchased the house in 1895. Senator Cochran was a lumberman, financier, railroader, industrial leader, state senator, and a living exponent of true charity. He supported many charities, placing his funds in the hands of friends whom he trusted and commanding that none should know where they were spent. He was known as the "Iceman of Fourth Street" through his thoughtful provision of ice for the poor families who could not afford it to keep milk cold. He died in 1911, but his widow maintained the house until her death.

1005 West Fourth Street was purchased by Dr. E. Lloyd Rothfuss in 1936. Dr. Rothfuss turned the proud home with its fourteen foot ceilings and walls four bricks thick into nine apartments. He and his wife resided in six rooms on the first floor east.

As did the owners of the past, the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Harold L. Hurwitz, are maintaining this building with careful intention both to preserve the integrity of the original structure, and to insure the continuing value to the community of this most impressive West Fourth Street landmark.

Ten Hundred and Twenty-Two

In 1878, Charles Coburn Mussina purchased the tract of land upon which he intended to build his private residence. The home was designed in 1881 by Isaac Hobbs and Son, Architect, of Philadelphia, and their fee was $95. The specifications, still held in the Mussina family, state that the house shall be:

> *". . . a two full stories high with a gable roof. The bricks are to be of good color and all mortar for the stone and brick work to be composed of good screened sand and fresh lime, properly proportioned and thoroughly worked to be the best quality of mortar."*

The home is entered through large double front doors over which are stained glass windows bearing the initials of the owner on one side and the then current house number (312) on the other. Almost all of the rooms have exquisite stained glass windows purchased from the Keystone Glass Works, of Philadelphia, handlers of French and American glass and makers of stained, engraved, and embossed glass.

The east living room features upper window sashes of stained glass squares surrounding a center square of daintily etched and embossed flowers and birds. The fireplace opening is surrounded by tiles depicting scenes from Sir Walter Scott's novels. Above the ornate walnut and maple bannister leading to the second floor is another wall of fine glass windows similar to the others with exotic birds, butterflies, and flowers.

The Sun-Gazette newspaper reported on March 22, 1882 that:

> *"the residence of Charles C. Mussina on West Fourth Street has been completed and a handsome structure it is."*

This is the only home built, owned, and still lived in by the same family. Miss Martha Mussina, well-known local artist, currently lives there.

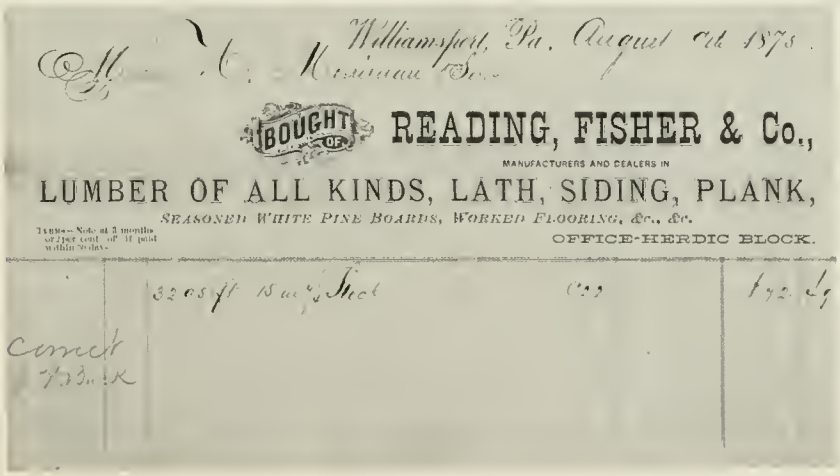
Ten Hundred and Twenty-Five

One of the early homes on West Fourth Street was this three-story frame Mansard dwelling built in 1865 for John G. Reading. Reading was lured to Williamsport in the late 1850's by his desire to become actively engaged in the management of lumbering interests in which he had heavily invested. He had been quite successful in the mercantile business in Flemington, New Jersey, but failing health had required the sale of that business and reinvestment of his funds with Mahlon Fisher, a Williamsport lumberman. Reading became extensively involved with many local concerns and retained his interest in them until the mid-1870's.

When John Reading moved to Philadelphia, the house became the property of his cousin, Franklin Reading.

The exterior of the home, which has remained unaltered, features beautiful bay windows with delicate wrought iron trim matching that used on the porch roof. Double front doors open on an entry hall with a circular stairway to the third floor. At one time, each room contained a black marble fireplace.

The home has changed hands many times, been remodeled to provide five apartments, and is now owned by B. C. Rothfus, who resides in a first-floor apartment.


Williamsport, Pa. August 6th 1875.

BOUGHT OF READING, FISHER & Co.,

MANUFACTURERS AND DEALERS IN

LUMBER OF ALL KINDS, LATH, SIDING, PLANK,

SEASONED WHITE PINE BOARDS, WORKED FLOORING, &c., &c.

OFFICE-HERDIC BLOCK.

Ten Hundred and Twenty-Eight

Although lumbering was indeed the primary cause of the prosperity that created West Fourth Street fortunes, many diverse industries emerged in conjunction with the growth of Williamsport. J. K. Mosser, tannery, became the largest sole cutting plant in the world. J. E. Dayton made over fifty separate shoe styles from high-grade dress to hunting, work, and railroad shoes. Lycoming Rubber manufactured car springs and other hard rubber products, later becoming Keystone Rubber and manufacturing shoes for lawn tennis, yachting, and gymnasium use. E. Keeler and Company was established in 1864 and is still in existence manufacturing water tube boilers and oil and gas burners. The Wire Buckle Suspender Company was the largest in the world with a daily capacity of 40,000 pairs of suspenders. The National Paint Works was the fifth factory in the United States to manufacture ready-to-use paints. Flock Brewing Company made lager beer, sarsaparilla, nectar, and root beer. Wood related companies included L. M. Castner, picture and mirror frames; W. D. Crooks and Sons, doors; Williamsport Furniture, bedroom furniture; H. D. Hermance and E. A. Rowley, woodworking machines for furniture factories.

One of the smaller industries of Williamsport began in 1865 when William Sipe settled his family here, building his home and a small factory with three pottery wheels one mile west of Herdic House. At first, he made redware exclusively and supplied the area for a one hundred mile radius. Later, he was a dealer in terra-cotta, sewer pipes, and manufactured stoneware.

A privately owned collection of Sipe and Sons earthenware–bowls, crocks, and jugs.

Sipe and Sons made all kinds of stoneware, which they decorated with blue, the only color that would not bake out under extremely high kiln temperatures. Many of the potters used the same basic designs and the easiest to achieve were the hand painted plumes and sprays. Occasionally stencils were used.

All of this American pottery, sought after and prized by today's collectors, reminds us of the time when the good earth provided all the basic materials for the making of storage containers for our fruitful bounty.

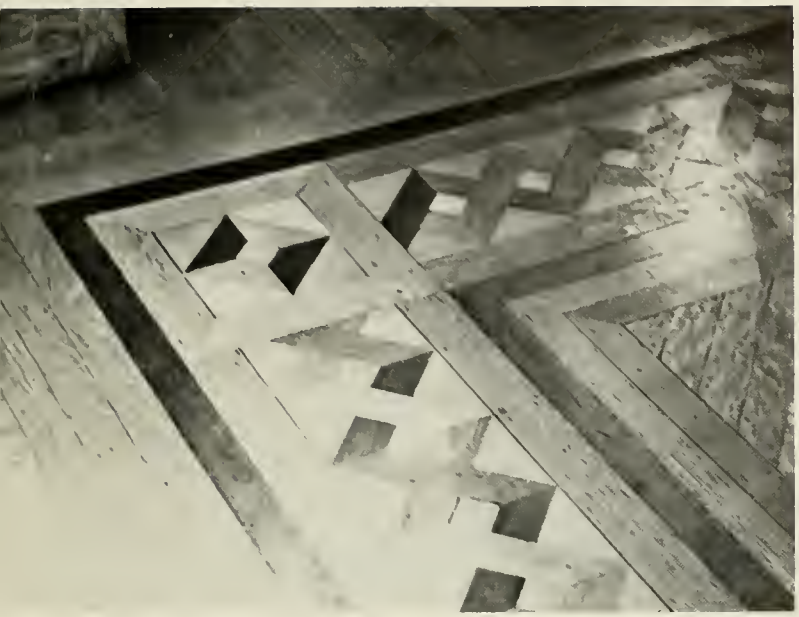
Ten Hundred and Fifty-One

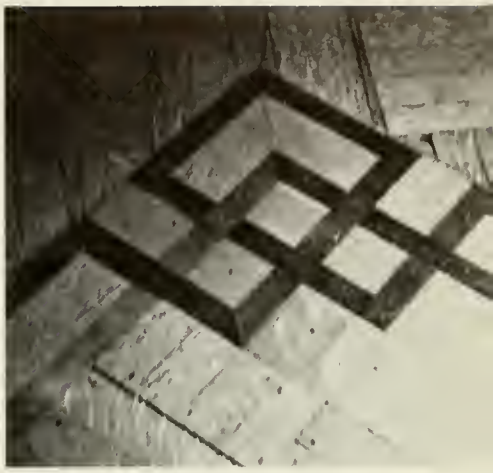
The residence at 1051 was built for William Howard and his wife in the 1890's. Howard was one of Williamsport's pioneer lumbermen, but is best remembered for his philanthropic support of the Masonic Order. It was through a provision of his will that the Howard Memorial Cathedral on Fourth Street was built and dedicated. It stands today as a testimony to the life long devotion and generosity of its donor.

The lovely Howard residence became a multi-family dwelling after the Depression. It was purchased by Dr. Francis Costello, and is now owned by Dominic J. and Frances Santalucia.

Through the passing years, the house has remained virtually unaltered in its external appearance. The delicate black wrought iron balcony and the black stone trim accentuate varied patterns of brickwork. Intricate panels enhance the beauty of this massive white brick structure. Its many windows are as varied as the glass they contain; bull's eye (behind the balcony), leaded, French plated, and stained. On both floors to the left of the entrance, a two foot thick solid stone curved lintel tops three curved glass windows. The second story center window arrangement is flanked by columns supporting stone wreaths with marble centers.

The interior which once contained over twenty rooms, reflects the bountiful harvest of the lumberman. Parquet floors with elaborate designs are surrounded by natural oak woodwork and wainscoting. The staircase, although partially enclosed, still illustrates the skill of a master carpenter, and handsomely carved newel posts stand proudly in the hallways.





Cherry, curly maple and oak form fascinating geometric designs in these parquet floors.

"May neither fire destroy
nor waste impair,
Nor time consume thee
to the twentieth heir,
May taste respect thee
and may fashion spare."

. . T. Costain

Epilogue

The end of the West Fourth Street Story has not been written, nor can it be predicted.

Speaking of the fledgling community emerging on the northern bank of the Susquehanna at William's Port during the first half of the Nineteenth Century, Meginness wrote:

> *"What is destined to be in the future, it is difficult to predict; but if energy, intelligence, and moral worth do not prove unavailing, we may safely anticipate for it a high and proud pre-eminence."*[1]

His timeless words are most appropriate as we remember the past, consider the present, and act for the future of West Fourth Street.

[1] Meginness, John F., "A History of the West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna." Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1857.

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RESIDENCES ON

FOURTH STREET